



سورة المسد

AL-LAHAB (Al-Masad)

Name

The Surah takes its name from the word *Lahab* in the first verse.

Period of Revelation

Although the commentators have not disputed its being a Makki Surah, yet it is difficult to determine in which phase of the life at Makkah precisely it was revealed. However, in view of Abu Lahab's role and conduct against the Holy Prophet's message of Truth, it can be assumed that it must have been revealed in the period when he had transgressed all limits in his mad hostility to him, and his attitude was becoming a serious obstruction in the progress of Islam. It may well have been revealed in the period when the Quraish had boycotted the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) together with the people of his clan and besieged them in Shi'b Abi Talib, and Abu Lahab was the only person to join with the enemies against his own relatives. The basis of this assumption is that Abu Lahab was the Holy Prophet's uncle, and public condemnation of the uncle by the tongue of the nephew could not be proper until the extreme excesses committed by the uncle had become visible to everyone. If the Surah had been revealed before this, in the very beginning, the people would have regarded it as morally discourteous that the nephew should so condemn the uncle.

Background

This is the only place in the Quran where a person from among the enemies of Islam has been condemned by name, whereas in Makkah as well as in Madinah, after the migration, there were many people who were in no way less inimical to Islam and the Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) than Abu Lahab. The question is, what was the special trait of the character of this person, which became the basis of this condemnation by name? To understand that it is necessary that one should understand the Arabian society of that time and the role that Abu Lahab played in it.

In ancient days since there prevailed chaos and confusion, bloodshed and plunder throughout Arabia, and the condition since centuries was that a person could have no guarantee of the protection of life, honor and property except with the help and support of his clansmen and blood relations, therefore *silah rehmi* (good treatment of the kindred) was esteemed most highly among the moral values of the Arabian society and breaking off of connections with the kindred was regarded as a great sin. Under, the influence of the same Arabian tradition when the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) began to preach the message of Islam, the other clans of Quraish and their chiefs resisted and opposed him tooth and nail, but the Bani Hashim and the Bani al-Muttalib (children of al-Muttalib, brother of Hashim) not only did not oppose him but continued to support him openly, although most, of them had not yet believed in his Prophethood. The other clans of Quraish themselves regarded this support by the blood relations of the Holy Prophet as perfectly in accordance with the moral traditions of Arabia. That is why they never taunted the Bani Hashim and the Bani al-Muttalib in that they had abandoned their ancestral faith by supporting a person who was preaching a new faith. They knew and believed that they could in no case hand over an individual of their clan to his enemies, and their support and aid of a clansman was perfectly natural in the sight of the Quraish and the people of Arabia.

This moral principle, which the Arabs even in the pre-Islamic days of ignorance, regarded as worthy of respect and inviolable was broken only by one man in his enmity of Islam, and that was Abu Lahab, son of Abdul Muttalib. He was an uncle of the Holy Prophet, whose father and he were sons of the same father. In Arabia, an uncle represented the father especially when the nephew was fatherless. The uncle was expected to look after the nephew as one of his own children. But this man in his hostility to Islam and love of *kufir* trampled all the Arab traditions under foot.

The traditionists have related from Ibn Abbas with several chains of transmitters the tradition that when the Holy Prophet was commanded to present the message of Islam openly, and he was instructed in the Quran to warn first of all his nearest kinsfolk of the punishment of God, he ascended the Mount, Safa one morning and called out aloud: *Ya sabahah* (O, the calamity of the morning!). This alarm in Arabia was raised by the person who noticed early at dawn an enemy tribe advancing against his tribe. When the Holy Messenger made this call, the people enquired as to who had made the call. They were told that it was Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace). Thereat the people of all the clans of Quraish rushed out. Everyone who could, came; he who could not, sent another one for himself. When the People had assembled, the Holy Messenger calling out each clan by name, viz. O Bani Hashim, O Bani Abdul Muttalib, O Bani Fihir, O Bani so and so, said: "If I were to tell you that behind the hill there was an enemy host ready to fall upon you, would you believe me?" The people responded with one voice, saying that they never had so far experienced a lie from him. The Holy Prophet said: "Then I warn you that you are heading for a torment." Thereupon, before anyone else could speak, Abu Lahab, the Holy Prophet's uncle, said: "May you perish! Did you summon us for this?" Another tradition adds that he picked up a stone to throw at the Holy Prophet. (Musnad Ahmad, Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi, Ibn Jarir, and others).

According to Ibn Zaid, one day Abu Lahab asked the Holy Prophet: "If I were to accept your religion, what would I get?" The Holy Prophet replied: "You would get what the other believers would get." He said: "Is there no preference or distinction for me?" The Holy Prophet replied: "What else do you want?" Thereupon he said: "May this religion perish in which I and all other people should be equal and alike!" (Ibn Jarir).

In Makkah Abu Lahab was the next door neighbour of the Holy Prophet. Their houses were separated by a wall. Besides him, Hakam bin As (Father of Marwan), Uqbah bin Abi Muait, Adi bin Hamra and Ibn al-Asda il-Hudhali also were his neighbours. These people did not allow him to have peace even in his own house. Sometimes when he was performing the Prayer, they would place the goat's stomach on him; sometimes when food was being cooked in the courtyard, they would throw filth at the cooking pot. The Holy Prophet would come out and say: "O Bani Abdi Manaf, what kind of neighborliness is it?" Abu Lahab's wife, Umm Jamil (Abu Sufyan's sister), had made it a practice to cast thorns at his door in the night so that when he or his children came out of the house at dawn, they should run thorns in the foot. (Baihaqi, Ibn Abi Hatim, Ibn Jarir, Ibn Asakir, Ibn Hisham).

Before the proclamation of Prophethood, two of the Holy Prophet's daughters were married to two of Abu Lahab's sons, Utbah and Utaibah. After his call when the Holy Prophet began to invite the people to Islam, Abu Lahab said to both his sons: "I would forbid myself seeing and meeting you until you divorced the daughters of Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings)." So, both of them divorced their wives. Utaibah in particular became so nasty in his spitefulness that one day he came before the Holy Prophet and said: "I repudiate *An-najmi idha hawa and Alladhi dana fatadalla*" and then he spat at him, but his spital did not fall on him. The Holy Prophet prayed: "O God, subject him to the power of a dog from among Your dogs." Afterwards, Utaibah accompanied his father in his journey to Syria. During the journey the caravan halted at a place which, according to local people, was visited by wild beasts at night. Abu Lahab told his companions, the Quraish: "Make full arrangements for the protection of my son, for I fear the curse invoked by Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) on him." Accordingly, the people made their camels sit all around Utaibah and went to sleep. At night a tiger came which crossed the circle of the camels and devoured Utaibah tearing him to pieces. (Ibn Abdul Barr: *Al-Istiab*; Ibn Hajar: *Al-Isabah*; Abu Nuaim al-Isfahani: *Dalail an-Nubuwwat*; As-Suhaili: *Raud al-Unuf*. Here there is a difference of opinion. Some reporters say that the divorce took place after the Holy Prophet's proclamation of Prophethood and some say that it took place after the revelation of *Tabbat yada Abi Lahab*. There is also a difference of opinion about whether Abu Lahab's this son was Utbah or Utaibah. But this much is confirmed that after the conquest of Makkah, Utbah embraced Islam and took the oath of allegiance at the Holy Prophet's hand. Therefore, the correct view is that it was Utaibah).

Abu Lahab's wickedness can be judged from the fact that when after the death of the Holy Prophet's son Hadrat Qasim, his second son, Hadrat Abdullah, also died, this man instead of condoning with his nephew in his bereavement, hastened to the Quraish chiefs joyfully to give them the news that Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) had become childless that night. This we have already related in the commentary of Surah Al-Kauthar.

Wherever the Holy Prophet went to preach his message of Islam, this man followed him and forbade the people to listen to him. Rabiah bin Abbad ad- Dill has related: "I was a young boy when I accompanied my father to the face of Dhul-Majaz. There I saw the Holy Messenger (may peace be upon him) who was exhorting the people, saying: 'O people, say: there is no deity but Allah, you will attain success.' Following behind him I saw a man, who was telling the people: 'This fellow is a liar: he has gone astray from his ancestral faith.' I asked; who is he? The people replied: He is his uncle, Abu Lahab." (Musnad Ahmad, Baihaqi). Another tradition from Hadrat Rabiah is to the effect; "I saw that the Holy Prophet went to the halting place of each tribe and said: 'O children of so and so, I have been appointed Allah's Messenger to you. I exhort you to worship only Allah and to associate none with Him. So, affirm faith in me and join me so that I may fulfill the mission for which I have been sent.' Following close behind him there was a man who was saying: 'O children of so and so, he

is leading you astray from Lat and Uzza and inviting you to the religion of error and innovation which he has brought. Do not at all listen to what he says and do not follow him.' I asked my father: who is he? He replied: he is his uncle, Abu Lahab." (Musnad Ahmad, Tabarani). Tariq bin Abdullah al-Muharibi's tradition is similar. He says: "I saw in the fare of Dhul-Majaz that the Holy Messenger (upon whom be peace) was exhorting the people, saying: 'O people, say *La ilaha ill-Allah*, you will attain success', and behind him there was a man who was casting stones at him, until his heels bled, and he was telling the people: 'Do not listen to him, he is a liar.' I asked the people who he was. They said he was his uncle, Abu Lahab." (Tirmidhi).

In the 7th year of Prophethood, when all the clans of Quraish boycotted the Bani Hashim and the Bani al- Muttalib socially and economically, and both these clans remaining steadfast to the Holy Prophet's support, were besieged in Shib Abi Talib, Abu Lahab was the only person, who sided with the disbelieving Quraish against his own clan. This boycott continued for three years, so much so that the Bani Hashim and the Bani al- Muttalib began to starve. This, however, did not move Abu Lahab. When a trade caravan came to Makkah and a besieged person from Shib Abi Talib approached it to buy some article of food, Abu Lahab would shout out to the merchants to demand a forbidding price, telling them that he would make up for any loss that they incurred. Thus, they would demand exorbitant rates and the poor customer had to return empty handed to his starving children. Then Abu Lahab would purchase the same articles from them at the market rates. (Ibn Sa'd, Ibn Hisham).

On account of these very misdeeds this man was condemned in this Surah by name, and there was a special need for it. When the Holy Prophet's own uncle followed and opposed him before the Arabs who came for hajj from outside Makkah, or gathered together in the fares held at different places, they regarded it as against the established traditions of Arabia that an uncle should run down his nephew without a reason, should pelt stones at him and bring false accusations against him publicly. They were, therefore, influenced by what Abu Lahab said and were involved in doubt about the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace). But when this, Surah was revealed, and Abu Lahab, filled with rage, started uttering nonsense, the people realized that what he said in opposition to the Holy Prophet was not at all reliable, for he said all that in his mad hostility to his nephew.

Besides, when his uncle was condemned by name, the people's expectation that the Holy Messenger (upon whom be peace) could treat some relative leniently in the matter of religion was frustrated for ever. When the Holy Messenger's own uncle was taken to task publicly the people understood that there was no room for preference or partiality in their faith. A non-relative could become a near and dear one if he believed, and a near relation a non-relative if he disbelieved. Thus, there is no place for the ties of blood in religion.

The Holy Quran

The Day Break

Sura # 111 – 5 Verses - Makkah

سورة المسد

تَبَّتْ يَدَا أَبِي لَهَبٍ وَتَبَّ ﴿1﴾

(of) Abu	أَبِي	The two hands	يَدَا	Perish	تَبَّتْ
		And perish he	وَتَبَّ	Lahab	لَهَبٍ

Translit	Tabbat Yadā 'Abī Lahabin Wa Tabba				
AhmedAli	ابو لہب کے دونوں ہاتھ ٹوٹ گئے اور وہ ہلاک ہو گیا				
Jalandhry	ابو لہب کے ہاتھ ٹوٹیں اور وہ ہلاک ہو				
YusufAli	Perish the hands of the Father of Flame! Perish he!				
M.Khan	Perish the two hands of Abû Lahab (an uncle of the Prophet), and perish he!				
Pickthal	The power of Abu Lahab will perish, and he will perish.				
Shakir	Perdition overtake both hands of Abu Lahab, and he will perish.				

مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُ مَالُهُ وَمَا كَسَبَ ﴿2﴾

Him	عَنْهُ	Will benefit	أَغْنَىٰ	Not	مَا
He earned	كَسَبَ	And what	وَمَا	His wealth	مَالُهُ

Translit	Mā 'Aghnā 'Anhu Māluhu Wa Mā Kasaba				
AhmedAli	اس کا مال اور جو کچھ اس نے کمایا اس کے کام نہ آیا				
Jalandhry	نہ تو اس کا مال ہی اس کے کچھ کام آیا اور نہ وہ جو اس نے کمایا				
YusufAli	No profit to him from all his wealth, and all his gains!				
M.Khan	His wealth and his children will not benefit him!				
Pickthal	His wealth and gains will not exempt him.				
Shakir	His wealth and what he earns will not avail him.				

سَيَصْلَىٰ نَارًا ذَاتَ لَهَبٍ ﴿3﴾

Of	ذَاتَ	In a Fire	نَارًا	He will be burnt	سَيَصْلَىٰ
				Blazing flames	لَهَبٍ

Translit	Sayaṣṣlā Nārāan Dhāta Lahabin				
AhmedAli	وہ بھڑکتی ہوئی آگ میں پڑے گا				
Jalandhry	وہ جلد بھڑکتی ہوئی آگ میں داخل ہو گا				
YusufAli	Burnt soon will he be in a Fire of blazing Flame!				
M.Khan	He will be burnt in a Fire of blazing flames!				

The Holy Quran

The Day Break

Sura # 111 – 5 Verses - Makkah

سورة المسد

Pickthal	He will be plunged in flaming Fire,
Shakir	He shall soon burn in fire that flames,

وَأَمْرَأَتُهُ حَمَّالَةَ الْحَطَبِ ﴿٤﴾

(of) wood	الْحَطَبِ	(who is) carrier	حَمَّالَةَ	And his wife	وَأَمْرَأَتُهُ
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Translit	Wa <u>Amra'</u> atuhu Hammālata Al-Ĥaṭabī				
AhmedAli	اور اس کی عورت بھی جو ایندھن اٹھائے پھرتی تھی				
Jalandhry	اور اس کی عورت بھی جو ایندھن سر پر اٹھائے پھرتی ہے				
YusufAli	His wife shall carry the (crackling) wood —as fuel!—				
M.Khan	And his wife too, who carries wood (thorns of Sadan which she used to put on the way of the Prophet (SAW) , or use to slander him).				
Pickthal	And his wife, the wood-carrier,				
Shakir	And his wife, the bearer of fuel,				

فِي جِيدِهَا حَبْلٌ مِّن مَّسَدٍ ﴿٥﴾

(will) be twisted rope	حَبْلٌ	Her neck	جِيدِهَا	In	فِي
		Palm fibre	مَّسَدٍ	Of	مِّن

Translit	Fī Jīdihā Ĥablun Min Masadin				
AhmedAli	اس کی گردن میں مونج کی رسی ہے				
Jalandhry	اس کے گلے میں مونج کی رسی ہوگی				
YusufAli	A twisted rope of palm-leaf fibre round her (own) neck!				
M.Khan	In her neck is a twisted rope of Masad (palm fibre).				
Pickthal	Will have upon her neck a halter of palm-fibre.				
Shakir	Upon her neck a halter of strongly twisted rope.				